WEALTH AND BEAUTY.

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A POEM

READ BEFORE

THE PHI BETA KAPPA SOCIETY

IN CAMBRIDGE, JULY 19, 1855.

BY

WILLIAM HENRY HURLBUT.

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JOHN BARTLETT.
M DCCC LV.

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WEALTH AND BEAUTY.

THERE are two natures in the mould of man,
Two worlds of glory sleep within the span
Of the frail dome, whose heaven-lit arches hold
Whatever hands have done, or tongues have told;
The world of Wealth, — of all the conquered Earth
Yields to her Master's comfort or his mirth,
The sweet results of sore and sweating toil
From field and forest wrung, from sea and soil;
The world of Beauty, — shapes sublimely wrought
From the rich ores of Passion and of Thought,
Immortal banquets of the hungry heart,
The mild majestic miracles of Art!

Two different worlds! — how weary, or how vain
Life, quite divorced from either of the twain!
Turn to the Nations! — Though a thousand arts
Decked her fair streets, and filled her glittering marts,
Though all the tides of splendid commerce rolled
Where purple Carthage served her gods of gold,
The soulless grandeur of the sensual state
Passed, at the touch of earth-dissolving Fate,
And left the memories of the prosperous land
Like Egypt's columns, to a grave of sand!
Not less the sadness, though the scorn be less
Where Fame but gilds a people's wretchedness;
See Titian's Venice, Buonarotti's Rome,
Beauty enshrined, and man without a home!
The private annals of the passing age
Repeat the lessons of the historic page,
Show to the mind, in many a modern home,
A lesser Carthage or a humbler Rome,
And the soul saddens, still condemned to meet
Dolts in the palace, sages on the street,

Crowns without sense, or sense without a crown,
The starving poet, or the pampered clown!

Thus doubly framed, to exquisite desires
Of Wealth that fills, of Beauty that inspires,
Shall Man, regardless of that inward sight
Which aches for visions of undying light,
Find, in mere fulness of the things of Time
The coronation of his hopes sublime?
The life of Nations is the life of men,
Each generation soars beyond the ken
Of earthly watchers: and the unseen fates
That deal with mortals, deal with mortal states;
Is Justice noble in the humblest soul?
Not less it honors the imperial whole!
The foul ambitions that degrade the man
But blight the deeper in their wider span;
One law of Light, of Grandeur, and of Grace,
Hangs o'er the Cottage, and controls the Race!
Yes! let Invention's mitigating hand
Win stubborn Nature to her blest command,

Sow States in deserts, star with sails the seas,
And soothe the world to rich Saturnian ease;—
But thou! the loftiest of the gifts of God!
Thou, by whose help selected souls have trod
The sacred silence of prolific space,
Imagination! whose informing grace
Dilates our life, and frees the aspiring soul
From earthly fetters and from Time's control!
If thou withdraw thy sanctions from the scene,
How poor is wealth, and majesty how mean!

Sweet is the morn just freshening into Day,
Sweet the cool evening, touched with pensive ray
Of the first stars, that, from the darkening skies,
Shine soft as Mercy in angelic eyes!
And, like the morn, Imagination opes
Dim vistas kindling with immortal hopes,
And, like the eve, Imagination's life
With purer passions stills the spirit's strife!

Turn with me then, as one who, worn with cares
Of crowded life, to ampler scenes repairs,
And swells his spirit with the large delight
Of the green forests, or the ocean bright;
Turn but one moment! give a short vacation
To thoughts of stocks and steam and annexation;
Turn to the Past! and bid its voice relate
What makes great nations most supremely great,
What shines the fairest in their prosperous days,
And makes their name a memory and a praise.

Forth from the East proceed, with equal ray,
The Dawn of genius, and the Dawn of day,
Touch the blue trembling of the Ægean Sea,
The isles awake, — and Greece begins to be!
The lithe Athenian lifts his searching eyes,
And the strong Spartan stretches for his prize,

The sluggish silence of the lone Levant
Starts at the echoes of the sailor's chant,
And far barbarians hurry to their shores
Roused by the chime of long resounding oars!
'T is Freedom's breath that swells the prospering sails,
'T is Freedom's smile that lights the hills, the vales,
'T is Freedom's strength that bids the cities rise,
The sounding cities arched with shining skies!
Greatness she gives, and glory and delight,
Joy to the day, and comfort to the night!
O'er every field the bees of Cecrops sing,
On every slope Minerva's olives spring,
Light in the air, and motion on the earth,
The May of History blossoms at the birth!

When soft returning, with a sweet surprise
Spring's first green morning greets our gladdened eyes,

How doth the landscape, quickening on the sight,
Transfuse our being with a subtler light!
The soul delighted, breathes its own perfumes,
So bud the thoughts, and so the spirit blooms!
Not less the Grecian, when his beauteous home
Rose, fresh as Venus, from the sparkling foam,
Found, in the secret of his soul's delight,
A fairer world than met his sensual sight;
In changing radiance changeless Light he found,
Eternal voices in a fleeting sound;
Poured out to Nature all his passionate heart,
And Nature, smiling, blessed his love with Art!

Happy the bard, in those delicious days,
When Greece, enamoured, hung upon his lays,
And the strong race, rejoicing in the sun,
Thrilled to all passions, frowning upon none!
Or if the rage of Troy's heroic time,
Ring through his soul and rouse him into rhyme;

Or if he follow with admiring eyes
The varying fates that make the wanderer wise;
Or statelier treading the pathetic stage
Bid Love and Sorrow moralize the age;
Or light the Nation with the lyric fire,
And with the Ode Ambition's self inspire;
Or softly singing in the pastoral vale
See dove-eyed maidens pensive with the tale;
By turns as rapid, the impetuous throng
Sway to the impulse of his genuine song!
Nor pleads the poet in his words alone,
He charms in color, and he speaks in stone,
Till street, and temple, grove, and agora shine
With silent shapes of eloquence divine!
The light of Beauty, lovelier than the day,
Touches all Nature with its generous ray,
Makes the skies bluer, makes the fields more green,
And o'er-informs with meaning every scene;
A viewless presence of pervasive power,
It warms the root and paints the perfect flower;

The peasant feels it, and his eye grows bright,
It fills the poet with creative might,
As one soft breeze brings summer to the oak
And to small violets nestling in their nook.

The mirthful Chian from his goblet quaffed
The merry light that o'er his vines had laughed;
Fair dreams that dallied with the thymy bowers
Glowed in the honey of Hymettus' flowers;
Ay! every rapture of the soul or sense
Felt the fine glory. Life grew more intense;
Joy taught the Grecian, joy, and strength, and health,
The worth of Beauty in a land of Wealth!
True, the luxuriance of that wondrous prime
Ennobling virtue, still enhancèd crime;
So from one lump of rich redundant Nile
Soars a gay fly, and crawls a serpent vile;*

* This image I have borrowed from the Poems of the late T. L. Beddoes, of England, a man of great but imperfect genius.

Yet where the stream his genial flood restrains,
The poisonous viper lords it o'er the plains,
And duller realms which ne'er the muses knew,
Saw the worst revels of Silenus' crew.

Yes, Greece was glorious! and her sons sublime
Reared her proud State beyond the reach of Time;
In vain the blight of factions and of war,
In vain the setting of her earthly star,
In vain the rout of Chæronea's field,
The humbled banner, the deserted shield;
And ah! in vain that crowning shame of shames,
When Grecian myriads at the Isthmian games
Snatched, as a boon by scornful Romans flung,
The prize their fathers from the Persian wrung!
In vain Destruction summoned to her work
The stern Venetian and the ruthless Turk;
The ghost of Greece hath more of life to-day
Than the gross bulk of populous Cathay!

When the Mind's Merchant, in his quest of light,
Turns to the Eastward and the fountains bright,
Still o'er his path the Sunian star prevails,
Still the Piræus furls his grateful sails;
Light, strength, and beauty, till the world shall cease,
Glow on the mountains and the plains of Greece;
Marked on the splendors of the spirit's sphere
Parnassus dwarfs the giants of Cashmere,
And shrunk Ilissus rolls a statelier tide
Than wild Missouri or La Plata wide!

With Man's bold heart and ever busy brain
Strive Time and Change, but still they strive in vain;
The soldier's laurel is a barren bloom,
Each wave of Ocean is a sailor's tomb,
But still young Honor, in the trumpet's breath,
Hears the high promise of a glorious death,
And still the white sails sparkle o'er the sea
As thick as daisies on the summer lea!

When on that hill the traveller takes his stand
Where Pope and Cæsar rule on either hand,
Now downward gazing on the flowery heaps
Of that vast grave where Rome imperial sleeps,
Now pensive staying his entrancèd eye
Where Peter's Dome still floats upon the sky,
What thoughts, what memories, what emotions roll,
Full as Niagara, on his thrilling soul!
How doth his mind with lightning swiftness range
Through ringing centuries of colossal change!
There, at his feet, in hopeless ruin hurled,
Lie all the terrors that controlled the world;
To all the grandeurs of a glorious state,
By subject millions deemed embodied Fate,
One doom was granted, though a longer date,
With last year's snows, that in the wintry light,
Shone, for a moment, on Soracte's height!
And yet, dread vision of remorseless Time,
Is man's firm will less solemn and sublime?

See, in the presence of thy mightiest spoils
Man still undaunted, recommence his toils,
Range the vast relics of the ancient day
Into new splendors of a fresh array,
Hang the Pantheon higher in the air,
And statelier build the Capitolian square!

When the wild billows of the Northern flood
Had whelmed the nations in their sea of blood,
And, slow subsiding with an angry roar,
Let the first dayspring kiss the Italian shore,
The dove of commerce, harbinger of peace,
Brought Beauty's olive from the hills of Greece;
First the rich mistress of the Adrian wave
Imperial welcome to the wanderer gave,
Then North and South the graceful creature flew,
And all things brightened in her blissful view.
The saintly visions of great Augustine
Took shape and color. — Stately and serene
The purer Psyche of a loftier Faith
Filled the new genius with seraphic breath!

O'er every sea the proud Republics bore
Their haughty standards, and to every shore.
Their merchants braved it at the courts of kings;
The Ocean gloried in their bridal rings;
The gems of Syria and the gold of Spain
Fed the deep coffers of their daily gain;
Crusading Europe, thundering on its prey,
Must wait till Venice opes the golden way;
The sword of Genoa shivers all the spells
That barred the portals of the Dardanelles;
The Pisan valor and the Pisan skill
Bend the proud Arab to the Pisan's will;
And English Edward, taming down his glance,
Must sue to Florence ere he threatens France!

Alas! how changed from that triumphant time
The living aspect of the glorious clime!
Florence and Pisa, bound in common shame,
Blush at the memories of their ancient fame;
And Venice, voiceless in her proud despair,
Her dark eyes drooping, and her golden hair,—

Looks on the sea-waves moaning at her feet,
And pales to hear the drums of Austria beat!
The world, that trembled when the Bull of Rome
Once, furious snorting, left his Papal home,
With hoofs of silver, and with horns of gold
To toss the recreants of the Christian fold,
Now laughs with pity on his altered shape,
By plotting Frenchmen led, in strings of tape!
The throne of Naples is a huckster's seat
Where the "gross Bourbon," prescient of defeat,
Ransacks Vesuvius, and, when sulphur sells,
Buys of the Alps their venal William Tells!
All, all is slavery, but in one brave land
Where stout Sardinia keeps her steady stand,
Watched by her mountains, cherished by the sea,
She waits for Fortune, but she *will* be free!

Yet, spite of sorrow and of deep disgrace,
Wherever Beauty makes her dwelling-place

A sacred lustre ne'er deserts the day,
And thronging pilgrims crowd the mournful way.
Still, in the glories of Italian Art
Italian greatness speaks to every heart;
And the best scions of the noblest lands
Haste to her shores in still increasing bands;
Fair is the land, but oh how fair the light
That streams in blessings on the inward sight,
The light immortal of her glorious prime,
When Faith was lovely, Genius was sublime!
O'er every scene that light delicious lies,
Transfiguring Nature in the gazer's eyes.
Where gleam the splendors of the Alpine wall
O'er many a rustling grove, and glittering fall;
Where Garda's waves of burning azure roll —
A dream of Titian painted on the soul; —
Or wide Maggiore's far retreating sweeps
Mirror the Alps in amethystine deeps,
Or blissful Como softlier winds, between
Song-haunted shores, and heights of happy green,

Or hidden Orta's breezy summer fills
The purple silence of the Lombard hills;
Where Venice, gorgeous as an Eastern dream,
Takes the first crimson of the morning's beam;
Where, in the silence of Ferrara's street,
We seem to hear the heart of Tasso beat;
Where gay Boyardo charms, with silver strain,
The drowsy noontide of the Mantuan plain;
Where in the soft light of Urbino's skies
The soul of Raphael rises on our eyes;
O'er Milan's marbles, and Verona's towers,
O'er Padua's domes, and sunny Parma's flowers;
O'er that sweet quiet where Petrarca sleeps
Lulled by the pines on Euganean steeps;
O'er shining Florence, and the fertile vales
Where wandering Arno tells in song his tales;
O'er the dim grandeurs of that one vast dome
Which, like the Alps, o'erlooks the fates of Rome;
O'er Pœstum's temples, where the past reposes,
Soothed by the sea, and canopied with roses;

O'er the soft waters of the Elysian bay,
Where Naples opens to the perfect day,
That ripe pomegranate, bursting in the sun,
Which whoso finds, esteems his journeys done;
O'er all the land, that light immortal plays,
Redeems the sorrows of degraded days,
Persuades affection with resistless power,
And cheers with hope the darkness of the hour!

Imagination made the Past sublime,
Imagination mocks the touch of Time.
The great, the noble are our own forever,
Their presence and their glory leave us never;
Still, musing Petrarch, crowned with fragrant flowers,
Bends o'er his Virgil in his laurel bowers;
Still Dante, chafing like the salt sea foam,
Watches night deepen round the Tuscan dome;
Still Ariosto, with his magic lyre
Charms words to roses, kindles thoughts to fire;

Where mothers laugh to see their children's
grace,
There smiles Correggio with his earnest face;
The sunset's warm Apocalyptic skies
Still glow and gleam in Tintoretto's eyes;
The Archangelic Prince of every art
Still in all grandeur bears the grandest part;
And, hid in Summer's most delicious glooms,
Boccace looks downward thro' the orange
blooms,
Where Arab maidens wreathed in Attic bands
Dance off the moonlight from Sorrento's sands!

Turned to the Westward, our delighted eyes
See glorious England from the waters rise;
The proud old Island! scornful in her might,
Her heart as noble as her cliffs are white!
Land of our fathers! though the long debate
Of angry years have fostered mutual hate,
A secret impulse, vigorous in our souls,
O'erleaps the ocean that between us rolls,

And the young wanderer from the further West
Thrills as he touches thine ancestral breast;
How dear, how tempting the delicious theme
Once more, in fancy, to revive the dream
Of days that glided, like a summer stream
Full of the heavens, through many a tranquil scene
Of ivied England's immemorial green!
Past ancient castles, and cathedrals gray,
And bowery hamlets hidden from the day;
Morn came in music from the heavenward lark,
Sweet bells persuaded the delaying dark,
Sweet bells, that breathed along the fragrant air,
A psalm of mercy and a painless prayer!

What seeks the pilgrim on the English soil?
Her ports of traffic or her marts of toil?
The mighty forges, which in War or Peace
Beat out dominion without stint or cease?

No! the fair England that the pilgrim sees
Draws wealth and strength from other springs
than these;
He sees a land whose light shall not be dim
Till once again the stars lift up their hymn!
A land more pleasant and more calm than ours,
Forever gay with birds, and bright with flowers;
There Chaucer, with a rosebud in his hand,
On his white palfrey ambles through the land;
There Spenser, pacing in a woodland aisle,
Dreams of Orlando with a pure proud smile;
There high-souled Milton, with immortal eyes,
Reads Truth and History shining in the skies;
And that great poet in whose boundless heart
All thoughts, all passions had by turns a part,
Walks wise and happy, finding something good
In London alleys, as in Stratford wood!
There Sidney sings some sonnet of the South;
There Herrick's laughter shakes his ruddy
mouth;
There all the Mermaid brethren, frank and free,
Make night ambrosial with their generous glee;

And in the meetings of that genial race,
The guests of Will's and Button's find a place,
The witty roysterers of a jovial time
Ere sack was sinful, and champaigne a crime!
There Goldsmith shines, a diamond vilely set,
And at the Doctor quite forgets to fret; —
Nor these alone: there all the souls we find
Who reared the immortal England of the mind;
There rich and happy, dwell those shining ones,
Unvexed by critics, unpursued by duns.

Benignant poets! such your kindly art,
You loved all beauty with a human heart;
In secret sadness of the loftiest mind,
In sweet communions with our happy kind,
In loneliest sorrow, and most social mirth,
We turn to England out of all the earth!

Last in the race of empire and renown,
Our Western genius waits his double crown;

Lord of a land whose rich resources flow
At the mere menace of the invoking blow,
Wise as Ulysses, with as firm a will
To sail, and seek, and know, and conquer still,
His home is happy with all earthly weal,
And the whole world too narrow for his zeal;
His dreams are golden, and his waking hours
See his dreams dimmed by Californian showers;
He pants for conquest, — and the neighboring lands,
Ripe pears of Empire, drop into his hands;
Nor laws nor dangers stay his onward course,
He storms with flattery, or cajoles with force;
He wins and worries, — and supremely blest,
Eats his proud heart in passionate unrest!
Alas! the patriots whose devoted faith
Snatched Freedom's charter from the arms of death,
Staining with life the consecrated ground,
Saw other visions than the hope to found
The most extensive of all known concerns,
First in large profits and in quick returns!

Nor vain their visions! Beauty's latest Spring
Shall wake our Iowa in her turn to sing,
And fill the valleys of the fateful West
With Time's last music and perchance his best.

What lacks the poet in this glorious clime
To stir his rapture, and inspire his rhyme?

'T is true the lineage of our ardent race
Boasts more of passion than of kindling grace,
Among the fathers of the Pilgrim band
No fair Apollo wooed the virgin land;
Harsh were the men who sowed the imperial seed,
Their only Muses Sternhold and their creed;
The savage beauty of the shores they found
Fled from their axes' devastating sound;
Their wronged divines, with righteous wrath imbued,
The church's cherubs with her priests eschewed;

On their seared hearts the old monastic aisles
Fell more like sneers, alas! than "pensive smiles;"
Filled with the spirit of the Pyms and Vanes,
This thought was with them when they reared their fanes,
To build God's shrine and not the shrine of Gaud,
The House of Praise, but not the house of Laud;
Grim visaged Mather warmed his toes and soul,
In the chill Maytime with the crackling pole;
They cheered their spirits with a strangling witch,
Or Quaker squirming from the godly switch,
And for excitement took the sharp debate
With Death and Pequots at the farm-house gate.

We have no castles, for we had no lords;
No solemn ruins, wrought by ruthless hordes!

The grand deposits of antique romance
Strew Europe's soil from Hungary to France,
But ah! what anguish of forgotten ages
Is writ and stamped upon those crumbling pages!
The ivy that inspires our modern song
Strikes thro' dead hearts, and roots in ancient wrong!

Yet if we find not in our early years
Homeric princes nor romantic peers,
We have our heroes, kingliest of the earth,
Whose royal death transcends all royal birth.
What need of princes for the glorious West,
Born in the purple of a royal vest?
God gave us kings that for their country's good,
Died in the purple of a patriot's blood!
Their names are trumpets sounding from the past,
To shame our weakness with a generous blast;

They fill the landscape with a glorious host,
Each sod surrendering its heroic ghost;
And oh! what memories of the brave and strong
Should stir a Nation to the mood of song
More than the thought of that tremendous day,
When Freedom thundered over Boston Bay,
And full and fiercely, in the oppressor's path,
From Bunker's batteries, blazed a people's wrath!
Or what proud passion of the Tale of Troy
More grandly moves than Yorktown's solemn joy!

Nor fail the sweet thoughts that the poet takes
From fields and forests, rivers, hills, and lakes;
O'er us the sky as blue and solemn bends
As over Spenser and his stately friends.
The wind-swept pines of Massachusetts Bay
Murmur the legends of Creation's day;

A thousand blossoms, tender as the morn,
Earth's loving fancies, of the sunlight born,
Like timid angels nestling in the grass,
Breathe soft persuasion, wheresoe'er we pass.
Forever Beauty wanders o'er the Earth;
No land her home, for none can claim her birth;
An Inspiration and a breath of Heaven,
To man the Immortal mercifully given,
Where'er he lifts his spirit with his eyes,
Behold she greets him, smiling from the skies!
As Science, scorning all the bounds of space,
Makes every clime her chosen dwelling-place,
And cheers her votary with an equal smile,
On Switzer-Alp and Caribbean isle,
So Beauty hastens to the beauteous heart,
And the warm love begets the perfect Art!

The dream of Summer by the Hudson fills
The soul of Irving with delightful thrills;
The winding Concord with low music streams
Thro' the rich wisdom of our Saadi's dreams;

And the deep shadows of the Acadian pine
Fall on the sweet face of Evangeline!

This thing we want; the sympathizing heart,
The passion and the ecstasy of Art!
The poet's triumph must proceed again
Like Cimabue's, through the ways of men;
Nor shall the priests of Beauty raise their song
While grosser altars draw the clamorous throng!
Be this our care — to cherish and inspire
The general glow of Love's creative fire;
Then shall return Imagination's Spring;
The towns grow fair; the lonely places sing;
And shapes of Beauty, grander than of yore,
Teach Truths of Love ill-understood before!

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